JFK Assassination System
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Susan Pitts

INTERVIEW AND MEETING SUMMARY

ENTERED ON 4/11/77 BY BC

INTERVIEW WITH: "Victor Hedgeman"

REGARDING: The Congo

DATE-TIME-LOCATION: August 22, 1975, S201, a.m./p.m.

PRESENT: Bill Bader

HAS OR SHOULD BE DIGESTED: ________

FOLLOW UP REQUIRED: SEE PAGE 5 -- POSSIBLE INTERVIEWEES

MATERIALS SUBMITTED BY INTERVIEWEE(S): ________

EXECUTIVE SESSION: ____YES x NO

SECRET

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Interview and Meeting Summary - "Victor Hedgeman"
w/Bill Bader, August 22, 1975, S201

FILE:

After an extended tour with the United States Army and some education at San Diego State, Hedgeman went to Harvard where he studied in the Department of International Relations, working to a degree in political science. He didn't finish his degree but went after being recruited at Harvard into the OPC. He then became an NOC in Europe and for a number of years worked in Belgium, Luxembourg and France. His primary responsibility in Belgium was that of surveillance of Soviet operators in Europe. While in Brussels in 1959 he came to meet a good percentage of the Congolese who would be important in the Congo after independence: Ileo, Mobutu, and Adoula. In January of 1960 he became the first Chief of Station in the Congo; prior to that time the Agency had had merely a liaison service. In late July of 1960 Hedgeman returned to the United States with Ambassador Timberlake to press for a U.S. policy of political action in the Congo. Hedgeman's position was that the Soviets were moving large amounts of equipment and manpower into the Congo and that something had to be done to head it off. At the time he first went to the Congo he was the only man in the Station. A year later there were five or six and eventually the Station would reach upwards of twenty.Hedgeman mentioned that the relationships and staff that he built in the Congo persisted, and that when the Laotian operation started the group would move almost intact to Laos. Hedgeman believed that the Congo was vitally important to American interests,

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despite some criticism of that point from the State Department. He felt that the economic wealth of the Congo was important to the United States' future, and ;that it was equally important that the Congo remain a viable unit. He said that there was very strong resistance at the State level for political action involvement in the Congo. Fortunately the Congo operation became one of Allen Dulles' projects. At the beginning, with the approval of the Special Group, it was agreed that the CIA would begin to provide financial support for moderate Congolese politicians By August of 1960, however, Hedgeman and Timberlake were pushing for instructions that would allow them to pursue a course that would lead to a change in government. Hedgeman said that those close to Lumumba at that time were Soviet agents. The way that it was initially pursued was to the building of personnel assets investing in labor unions to help them with their propaganda, a lobbying campaign, direct payments to politicians.

The first major effort to rid the Congo of Lumumba came with a plan developed by Hedgeman to bribe enough members of the Senate in order to induce them to vote Lumumba out..This plan was to have taken place on the 7th of September, 1960. Hedgeman had arranged that the radio would be denied Lumumba after his defeat so that he would not be able to go on the radio to try to change the decision of the Senate. Unfortuneately and for reasons Hedgeman does not know to this day, Mobutu jumped the gun and threw Lumumba out. Lumumba in turn went

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to the Assembly and harangued them and got the vote and also got the vote in the Senate by bringing troops out and surrounding the Senate building. Hedgeman said that up to this point he had been thinking largely in parliamentary terms; that the way to rid the country of Lumumba was through the paramilitary method. After this experience of the 5th through the 7th, he decided more drastic and direct methods had to be employed. Hedgeman contends that the <u>coup</u> of Mobutu seized control was arranged and supported, and indeed, managed, by the Central Intelligence Agency. During the course of the interview Hedgeman spoke glowingly of Mobutu, who he feels is a man with good political judgment, a sense of history, and the capacity to be a Pan African leader. Mobutu was only twenty-nine at the time. Hedgeman says his most difficult time with Mobutu came in February of 1961 when the Kennedy administration decided that a federalized government, including all political factions was the only hope of averting civil war. Hedgeman was charged with going to Mobutu and telling him that the United States had decided to withdraw all support from him and that he would have to resign. He said Mobutu was utterly shocked by this and could not possibly believe the United States could believe that the Congo was ready for parliamentary government. He said Mobutu was so upset that he drew his gun and waved it in the direction of Hedgeman and said "If this happens, I will die," and, looking at Hedgeman, "so will others." Hedgeman said Mobutu only put his gun away when Hedgeman told him that he did not personally agree with the decision, that he was just carrying out orders like a good soldier.

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Hedgeman stressed that in this period, 1960-1961, the Congo was fraught with utter confusion; he sais that what they were running was a Scotch tape and baling-wire operation. As for paramilitary operations, Hedgeman said they began seriously in the end of 1962 with the arrival of a number of T-6's that he and Ed Gullion had asked for. He said that these aircraft were not intended to be used in combat, but only to reassure the Congolese that the United States was with them and provide them with a bit of black magic. Hedgeman professed that the paramilitary combat missions of 1963, in support of anti-rebel activities, were really quite minor affairs.

Some specifics. Hedgeman contended that he had no knowledge of the approval of funding of South African mercenaries and tribal leaders capable of resistance as approved by the 303 Committee. He also said, though, that he had important contact with Mike Hoare mercenaries, they gave no direct or indirect support to them. He also said there was no, repeat no, complicity or support on the part of the CIA in the ouster of Kasavubu by Mobutu in November of 1965.

Throughout the conversation, Hedgeman interspersed the most hair-raising tales of his and his daughter's brushes with death in their dealings with unruly mutinous Congolese, ranging from being placed before two different firing squads during one day and his evening as the selected victim of a hit contract given by the Union Miniere.

As for CIA employees who might testify well, should the Committee handle the Congo issue in executive session, Hedgeman recommended Edward Korn-Patterson, Bronson Tweedy, and Glen Fields.